Mineral exploration plays a key role in ensuring the long-term viability of Canada’s mining industry and sustaining the supply of minerals and metals we use in our daily lives.

In 2018, Ontario was the leading jurisdiction in spending followed by Quebec, then British Columbia. These three provinces accounted for almost 2/3 of total expenditures.

Mineral exploration and deposit appraisal expenditures reached $2.3 billion in 2018, increasing 6% compared to 2017.

Intentions for 2019 point to a 7% decline of mineral exploration spending to $2.2 billion.

Spending by mineral

Precious metals (mainly gold) are the most sought-after commodities in Canada, accounting for about 60% of the spending.

Other metals includes rare earth elements, lithium, and cobalt, which are commodities used in many advanced technologies.

Key indicators

Mineral exploration by province and territory

Canada total

Pre-Feasibility $1.5B
Deposit appraisal $0.6B
Off-mine-site $1.5B
On-site $1.7B
Deposit appraisal expenditures include activities to bring a delimited deposit to the stage of pre-feasibility or final feasibility studies in support of a production decision. Totals may be different because of rounding.

Source: Natural Resources Canada's Survey of Mineral Exploration, Deposit Appraisal, and Mine Complex Development Expenditures. Quebec data are compiled by l'Institut de la statistique du Québec.

Note: (p) preliminary; (si) spending intentions. Exploration is defined as the search for, discovery, and first delimitation of a mineral deposit or the re-evaluation of known deposit up to preliminary economic assessment. Deposit appraisal expenditures include activities to bring a delimitated deposit to the stage of pre-feasibility or final feasibility studies in support of a production decision. Totals may be different because of rounding.

For more information on the Canadian mining industry, visit the Minerals and Metals Facts website at https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/mining-materials/facts/20507

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